



THE JEWISH DAILY

FORWARD

SHA'AR ZAHAV

שַׁעַר זָהָב

MAY 1980

from a co-leader

It's come to my attention that an awful lot of people who come to Sha'ar Zahav have no idea of how we function nor how we got that way, so I thought that as my parting message, that it would be appropriate for me to fill in the gaps in knowledge.

The way I understand it, Bernard, Shami, and Daniel all knew each other and were more or less involved in Achvah, a Jewish social group. Then Bernard went to NYC and attended the New York shul. His experience there made him realize that it was important to integrate his gay and Jewish-religious natures. So, he came back to SF and the three men set a date to open, found space at Glide Memorial Church, advertised in the gay press and by word of mouth, and in late July of 1978, Sha'ar Zahav held its first service. I was given the ad for the synagogue by a friend from Dignity (the gay Catholic group which I had been attending with my then lover); I wrote, and about a week or two later, I attended SZ and decided I had come home. I worked with Daniel and Shami and another man to compile our first High Holy Day Service, and because of limited time and pressure, the service was only partially stripped of gender. The first time there were more than four women at a service^{was} when we did High Holy Days, and it was then that the first inklings of the issues we were to face in the future: sexism, privilege, the patriarchal nature of Judaism, leadership, money, class, ageism, etc. appeared.

We spent the first six months struggling to develop a structure. We came from so many different backgrounds, ways of living, conservative to radical politics, feminist, matriarchists, paternalistic sympathizers with the women's movement. We had as many differences as there could be imagined only in one's worst nightmare, but somehow, the need to have the synagogue survive prevailed.

The way we organized the synagogue was unique to any Jewish group: we were set up so that those people who were doing the work were also making the decisions. Initially, committees were formed and chairs of these committees were elected and served on the Va'ad. The Va'ad also had officers because we had to, to meet the laws of the state in becoming a corporation. And, since we had to have officers and were committed to co-equal representation, and leadership, we chose to replace the usual president, vice-president structure with one which made our attitude about equality of the sexes. While we met the requirements with a recorder and treasurer, even these jobs were not defined traditionally. Decision making was all to be done with a majority vote of the Va'ad so that members of the executive committee and the committee chairs were all equal in power. This is what made us different from all other Jewish organizations. We were organized in a horizontal rather than vertical way, with this lateral organization implying, and in fact, insuring equality which we felt would not have been possible any other way.

We then had to face organizing the by-laws to meet California standards, a task which now appears to have been easy in retrospect.

The next issue we faced was in making the decision to hire or not to hire a rabbi. This was the issue, on top of the continued and insidious sexism on the part of a few men in positions of actual or emotional leadership, which finally split the synagogue. Many of you have heard that this was the reason that the WOMEN left--that it was solely a women's issue. The truth is that the congregation had decided that we did not need, nor want, to hire a rabbi. It was only after third of the Va'ad had resigned--all women--that the Va'ad moved to hire Allen. Things got really messy and angry with this motion, and Allen was hired having won a majority vote at a special congregational meeting. At that point most of the women left the shul, as well as a number of the men. The way this was handled was in direct violation of the way we had been working up until this time.

The basic philosophical way we had constructed the synagogue and its method of decision making meant that everyone who wanted to have input into the process would find someone accessible if the person her/himself was not on the Va'ad. All Va'ad meetings were, and continue to be, open to all synagogue members. In this way, we were different from all other Jewish organizations—at least those I am familiar with—as well as gay organizations. The co-leader position was set up to let people know that we meant what we said, and when the woman co-leader job was unfilled, the fact that the structure was still there meant that we as a synagogue still believed that a woman was necessary for co-equal leadership.

Needless to say, most of you now recognize my other agenda for writing this history—I am vehemently opposed to the ~~proposed~~ changes in the executive committee structure which has been proposed. I am most indignant that most of those people who propose change were not here for the philosophical struggles we faced, for the consciousness-raising we all learned from. I think that it is to be noted that all those Va'ad members who have not supported the change are those who have been around since the beginning, who have struggled, who have learned, and who have grown immeasurably from having to find new ways to be both personally and in their political understanding of the world.

B. Keenny

BIKUR CHOLIM

Often as gays we are accustomed to handling our lives alone, without the support of family; without the knowledge that there will always be someone to be counted on in an emergency.

Synagogues have traditionially created a society - Bikur Cholim - which has fulfilled the special needs of someone sick, either in the hospital or at home, and also to serve the person's immediate family and friends.

There are many ways one can contribute. The most basic requirements would be a desire to be of service and a willingness to do what's needed; sometimes that will involve learning how to know, learning how to do. There will be workshops and a training period for that purpose.

There are two basic functions within the Bikur Cholim Society: lending emotional support in the form of visiting and being available at the hospital or home, and another in behind the scenes work such as shopping, feeding the animals, picking up mail, cancelling appointments, etc.

Both aspects are part of the same purpose: to care for and support those of us who may have the misfortune of falling ill, and to provide for each other an effective and loving way to do that.

Ta'lor Bar Shank
Allen Bennett
Steven Fritsch-Rudser
Michael Kretman

Ben Marcus
Victoria Phillips,
Chair
Laurie Radovsky
Ski

Anyone interested in joining the Bikur Cholim Society, or in finding out more about us, please leave your name with our answering service: 626-3131, or talk to one of us at services.

from where i stand

Some of the events of the past week have been particularly moving for me. I want to share some of the personal responses to them which have motivated me to write this month's column.

Last Sunday evening the San Francisco Jewish Community began its observance of the memorial of the Holocaust with a special program at Congregation Emanu-El. The readings, the music, and the pathos of the evening's observance were touching enough to have brought tears to my eyes more than once. Especially poignant for me was the realization that while the Yiddish Folk Chorus sang the Song of the Partisans, and while Professor Zygielbaum read poetry of the Holocaust in Yiddish and English, and while the children from Brandeis-Hillel Day School sang of an Israel reborn, we sat in a city where the Nazis planned to hold a rally the following Saturday.

What, then, had been the lesson(s) of the Holocaust? What right had we, as humans, to claim any superiority over the beasts of the field if, after the senseless slaughter of more than eleven million innocent people, we hadn't been able to get the message across to people that hatred and violence were not the answers. They were not even the questions....

It was probably the children's singing which made the evening so eerie for me. Here were the future of the Jewish people, being watched by the present and past, with the elders kvelling over the kinder, and with a vague sense of terror that they, the kinder, would burn in ovens exactly as their predecessors had done a few decades before if we couldn't teach them well enough and soon enough. The real question, haunting as it was, is: are we equal to the task?

Friday night at services, Daniel spoke about Israel, and well he should. It is the time for celebrating the thirty-second anniversary of the birth of the State of Israel, a state born from the ashes of the Holocaust, and a state whose life has been hanging in the balance since before its inception. The complexity of the political realities of the Middle East make it difficult to accurately assess the "facts" of the case, as well as to separate the emotional arguments from the legal and territorial ones. But the

image of another potential genocide impels us to work with greater diligence and fervor to stave off the wasting of human lives which this prolonged striving has perpetuated. The Middle East is a festering hot-bed of hate, and many of the issues which are present there are mirrored in our own lives here in the relatively secure comfort of our homes in the States. As a conclusion to the week-long observance of the Holocaust a "witness" has held at Bethel A.M.E Church to speak out against Nazism and other forms of oppressive thinking and behaving. Lacking totally in this presentation, as was the case at Emanu-El, was any indication that clearly a quarter million of those who died in the Holocaust were homosexual people whose lives were snuffed out for that reason alone. Some of those were Jews as well, and when I was asked by a member of the committee which organized the witness at Bethel why "the gays felt they had to put their two cents in" to everything, I confess that I was so stunned by the question that I was not able to give an adequate answer at the time. I have done so since, and I repeat it here: The (we) Jews have no corner on the market for suffering in the world, although we have done more than our fair share. We have enough experience at it that we can not only sympathize with others who are oppressed in the world, but empathize with them as well. Here we are faced with a group whose sufferings in this world have been as senseless as those of the Jews, and in many cases the sufferers have been Jews. How dare they ask the basis on which we intend to include ourselves! Too often, before, during, and after the Holocaust, we gay and lesbian Jews have been the Jews' Jews. We have been victims of oppression by our own people. How dare they claim ignorance of their own misdeeds!

Finally, as if in answer to some of my unspoken questions this week, I found a few answers in an unexpected place. At the Saturday night concert of the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps, in an auditorium filled with gay and lesbian people and their friends, our people did themselves proud. And they did us proud.

Over one hundred people filled the stage of Mission High School with music and excitement for more than two hours, and they played to an audience whose pride in what they saw and heard would have exceeded that of the proudest parent. For what we saw, and what brought tears to those same old tired eyes again, was something beautiful and hopeful. An all-volunteer group of people who didn't have the time, who hide their true identities much of the time, whose lives are made difficult by people who hate mindlessly, get together to rehearse with gruelling regularity, and what emerges is high-energy artistry, done with enthusiasm, and which serves as a tremendous source of inspiration for us.

To think that this group of the rejected and oppressed can produce such great music and entertainment is staggering in an of itself. But to take into account the full implications of where we have come from and where we are going is both breathtaking and a little frightening.

Out of the ashes of the Holocaust the State of Israel was born. The cost in human life will never be avenged. But Israel lives and serves as a potential beacon of hope for Jews everywhere.

And in the face of today's living demagogues, we, gay and lesbian Jews live. We organize ourselves and others in a effort to prevent another holocaust from happening, a holocaust in which we would surely be victims again.

I hear us making beautiful music together. The tears of sadness from memories of the past mingle with the tears of joy at hearing the hopeful music of our future. We shall live, and through our song we shall declare the great works of God, the One God of all of us.

Allen

This Month's Celebration--SHAVUOS

Shavuos is one of the three Pilgrimage festivals, when Jews at the time of the Temple would travel to Jerusalem. (The other two are Succos and Passover.) It is probably the least celebrated of the major observances at this time, despite its significance and beauty.

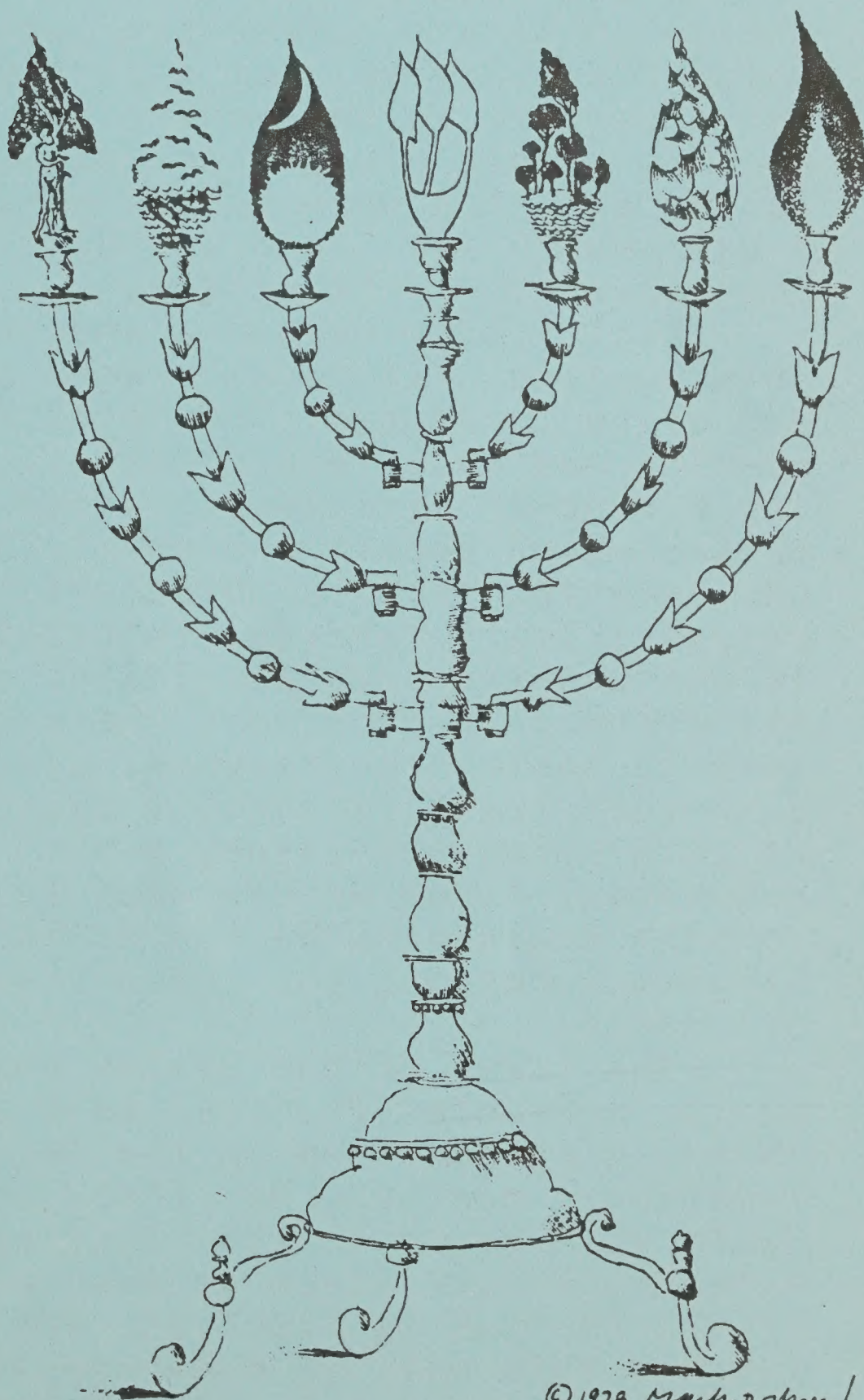
As with the other festivals, Shavuos has both religious (historical) and agricultural roots. Religiously, it celebrates the giving of the Torah to Moses and the Jewish people after the Exodus from Egypt. It is said that each Jewish soul, living or yet unborn, was present at Mount Sinai when God revealed the Law. (This might explain why Judaism is a religion one is born into rather than baptized into.) As for the agricultural aspects of the holiday, it is a time of thanksgiving for firstfruits, and celebrates the end of the grain harvest in the land of Israel. It is customary to decorate the home and the synagogue with flowers and greens, and to pass around sweet-smelling herbs during the service. Uniting the naturalistic and historical elements, some congregations spread grass on the floor of the synagogue, to represent the grass upon which Israel stood when we received the Torah.

The name Shavuos comes from the Hebrew word "shavuah," which means week. The English name for the festival is Pentecost. Both names highlight the fact that Shavuos marks the end of the Omer period, the seven weeks after Passover.

Because Shavuos marks the giving of the Torah, it has always been associated with Jewish education. In Europe, it was customary to begin a child's education at this time. Even now, Conservative and Reform congregations graduate their conversion classes on Shavuos or near it.

Our own congregation (an enchanting blend of all Jewish disciplines between Chassidism and Unitarianism and Cosmic Con-

sciousness) will celebrate Shavuos on Tuesday, May 20th at 8:00 p.m. in the Jewish Community Center. You are welcome to bring flowers and branches to decorate our sanctuary. (I don't think that grass for the floor is too good an idea, though).



the family circle

Only for a child does the right to belong exist free of responsibility! For the rest of us, we must accept expectations made of us as well as those made by us. The need to belong is non-negotiable; how we meet the need is a matter of volition.

I ask each of you to make a choice. Choose to be a constructive part of something constructive. Not a passive partner; not a partner in name only; not a partner who simply pledges and pays (tho that is the skeleton upon which the flesh forms). I ask you to act...and to think about the consequences of not acting.

Last Sunday we had a special membership meeting. All members were notified and urged to attend. The importance of the meeting was made very clear.... The meeting was never officially called to order... we failed to secure a quorum! That is not partnership; that is not accepting the responsibility inherent in belonging; that is not constructive participation. I ask all members to consider; the right to vote is basic; the responsibility to exercise that right is equally basic. Whether it is a synagogue issue, a city issue, or a national issue we are each responsible to make decisions. We can avoid the responsibility, but not the consequences of that avoidance.

The issue of the By-Law change originally scheduled for last week will now be an early agenda item on the regular congregational meeting, May 18th, and will be dealt with prior to the election of officers which will take place as soon as the issue of the By-Laws is resolved. For myriad reasons this will be more complicated than it would have been had the By-Law issue been resolved last week.

We can do it and we will do it. The hard way or the easy way, we must all take care of those things which require our attention. On an individual level, on a global level, on every level in-between, attention must be paid, decisions must be made, action must be taken.

I ask each of you who are members to actively discharge your decision making responsibilities to the very best of your abilities. Sha'ar Zahav is a living being. It requires nurturing by all of us. It can only be what you want and need to the extent that you make it so.

Without belonging life is a vacuum. Belonging breathes sweet warm molecules of air into the vacuum. Exercising responsibility brings order and purpose to sweet warm chaos of life. And to the person who willingly and actively discharges responsibilities, life affords satisfaction beyond telling!!!

Shalom,

Leila Raim, co-chair
Membership Comm.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS	
<p>If you're moving, please allow six weeks for processing time.</p>	<p>Attach current address label here.</p>
NEW ADDRESS:	
Name _____	
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip Code _____
Mail to: Sha'ar Zahav F.O.Box 5640 S.F. CA 94101	

outreach

It is one of the policies of Sha'ar Zahav to encourage our members to speak at other synagogues. We have presented programs at Sabbath services, for men's and women's groups, and even for confirmation classes. These speaking engagements give us the opportunity to discuss and describe our renewed dedication to Judaism, the significance of being a minority within a minority, and the wide variety of gay male and lesbian lifestyles.

This May, the focus of our speaking endeavors is on Santa Clara County where two measures on the June ballot could repeal gay civil rights ordinances already enacted by Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose. If these measures are repealed, employers and landlords will be able to deny jobs and housing to individuals merely on the basis of sexual orientation. It is the further sad reality that the civil rights of all Jews, whatever their sexual persuasion, are profoundly affected by this repeal effort. The organizing forces behind repeal are fundamentalist Christian groups which have not shown any inclination to practice tolerance for the religious freedom of others.

If you feel the call and would like to speak or assist in establishing a speaker's program, please phone me at 566-3162 or 433-0565, or leave a message with the synagogue's answering service: 626-3131.

Shalom,

Mike Zimmerman, Chair
Outreach Committee

Davening for the Uninitiated Or Learning How to Pray

Laurie Radovsky
Chairperson, Ritual Committee

Contrary to what many people have assumed, I did not grow up in a religious home. In fact, until I was in college, Jewish services were a mystery to me; I wouldn't have recognized an Aleinu or Amidah if I had tripped over it in the subway. How is it that, five years later, I find myself in charge of the liturgy of an entire congregation?

It's a long story. Briefly, most of what I learned was on my own, picked up here and there by attending services or reading books. One of the most fruitful sources of information I had was a Hillel rabbi who often threw in explanations of what we were doing as he led services. If someone looked puzzled, or said, "Saul, I don't understand..." the service was suspended until the question was answered. In this way, we learned to share our ignorance, and often found that others shared our questions.

As a general rule, this sort of service wouldn't work at Sha'ar Zahav. There are too many of us at services to stop and answer all questions. (At our Hillel, we were lucky to get a minyan.) However, on Friday, May 9th, I will be leading a "learning service" in which questions will not only be appropriate, they will be encouraged. I will explain what we are doing as we go along, and will entertain any questions as they come up. As a special feature of this service, I will explain the traditional body movements associated with Jewish prayer.

So don't be bashful--come and participate actively. Bring your questions. Don't feel bad about not knowing everything there is to know about Jewish prayer; start learning!

FROM THE BIBLE

CAIN AND ABEL

"...and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him"
(Genesis 4:8)

Cain was the first child of the first man and woman, the first farmer and the first murderer. In him war was born. Jealous of his shepherd-brother Abel, whose sacrifice seemed more acceptable to God than his own (Genesis 4:3-6), he lured him to a lonely, open field and struck him dead. God set a mark on Cain and the tribe of Cain to protect him, and them, from the vengeance of humans (Genesis 4:15). God is always more merciful than God's human creatures.

Cain the killer took to his heels, but his heels were slow. Guilt, God and conscience chased him fast, and a voice kept whispering: "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."
(Genesis 4:10)

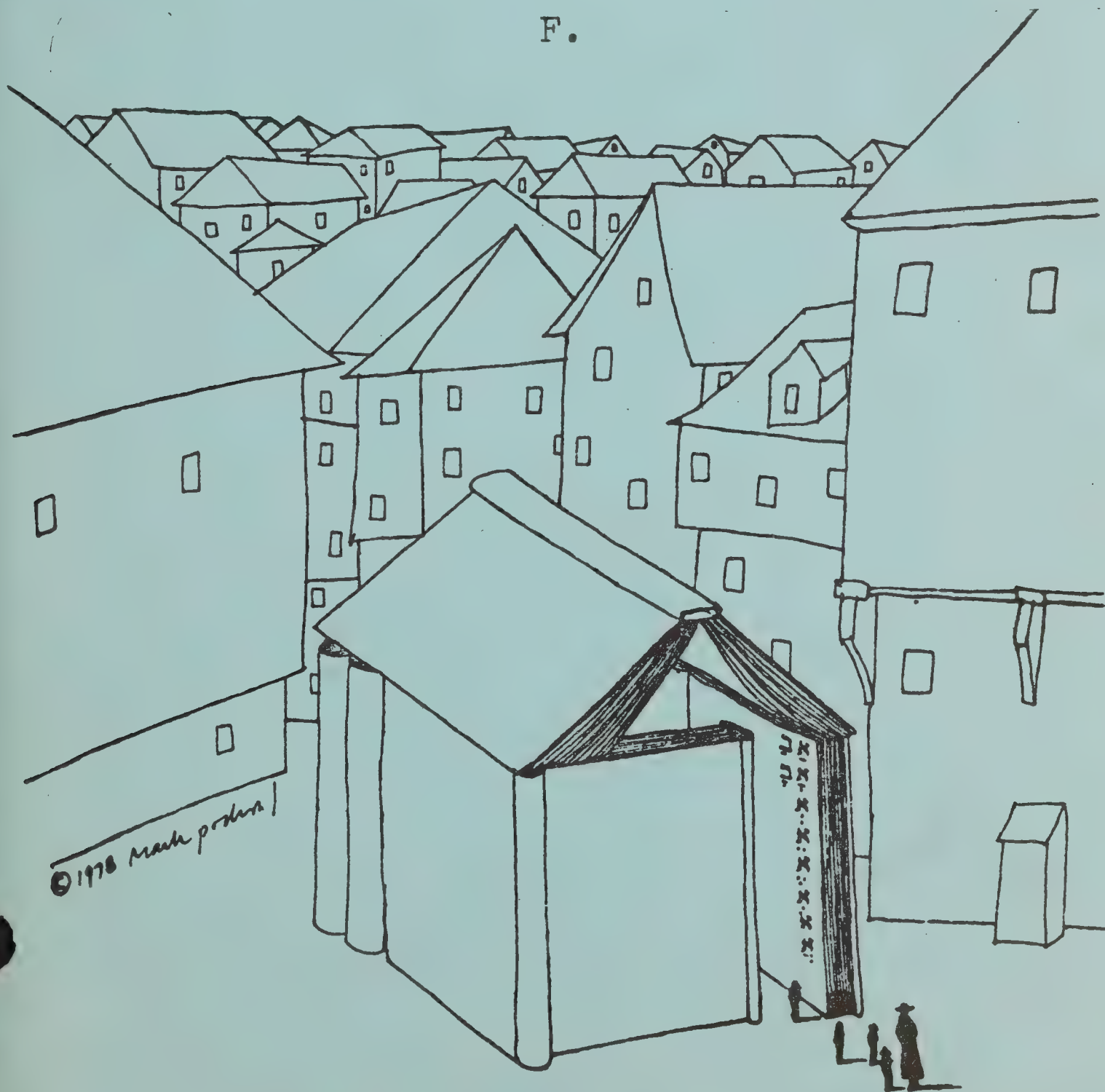
He built a city, founded a dynasty, fathered the tribe which still forges the weapons of war. He left some lessons we have not yet learned: that violence brings its own violent reward, that we are each other's keepers. Cain learned that, but have we?

Gentle Abel, though the breath of the Almighty was so strong within him, was no match for the furious Cain. He went down easily, in the prime of his days. Cain left descendants and the record of a brute masculine strength. Even Byron praised him, to the tune of Europe's cheers (Cain, 1821). But what of frail Abel? What could he leave? His very name means in Hebrew "breath", "vapor", "vanity".

He left far more than Cain. He bequeathed unwittingly a spirit that has proved invaluable in tempering the cruelties of the sons of Cain. He left the conviction that the worth of sacrifice depends not at all upon the nature of the offering, but on the character of the offerer. Faint faith gets but a faint reward. Even Jesus mentions Abel, calls him the first martyr: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous..." (Hebrews 11:4)

He created faith out of spilled blood. By faith he, being dead, yet spoke; spoke in Abraham, Moses, the Prophets.

F.



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fifth international conference of gay and lesbian jews

The Fifth International Conference of Gay and Lesbian Jews (Aug 29 - Sept. 1, 1980) continues to move from the drawing boards to reality. The site is confirmed, announcements sent to over 800 organizations world-wide, workshop ideas have been pouring in, even menu selections made! Requests for registration forms are starting to arrive - from a woman in Alabama, a man in Kansas and a very excited resident of Paradise Calif.!!!

Some attendees, for financial or social reasons, may want to stay at the homes of S.F. residents. An Off-Site Accommodations Committee, headed by David Gass, will be coordinating this. Anybody wishing to share their home on this wonderful weekend can contact David at 346-7077. We are also planning Havdallah dinners at individuals' homes on Saturday night. This will provide an opportunity for some quieter, more personal time with 3 or 4 of our out-of-town guests. Please consider such a dinner. We will provide a Havdallah packet with information and songs for this lovely tradition.

We can always use additional help on our committees - contact Aaron Cooper at 431-7386 to volunteer your time energy and ideas.

Irene Ogus
Steering Committee



P.O. Box 5640
San Francisco, Ca. 94101

(415) 431-7386

March 21 potluck
March 28 Victoria Phillips, for her father's
Yahrzeit.
April 4 Ronn Charles, for his move to New York
April 11 Oneg Committee, for David Ben-Jacob
April 25 Irene Ogus, for her trip to England

Last month's Oneg Committee meeting was on April 16th at David's. The May meeting will be announced at the third week at services.

In the continuing effort to illicit greater oneg participation, the oneg committee is scheduling another POT LUCK ONEG SHABBAT on May 16th. Please bring finger foods from one of the following categories: baked goods, fruits, vegetables, or cheeses. Come add to the spirit of Shabbat.

Antone wishing to sponsor an Oneg call David Ben-Jacob at 776-1289

Shalom,
David Ben-Jacob
Oneg Committee

women's chavara

A group of women has been meeting each month at each other's homes for a havdalah service and pot luck supper. We would like to invite any woman who might be interested to join us in this simple and beautiful way to end the sabbath and start the week. If you need additional information, please call Penny (668-6902) or Leila (751-1576). If you need transportation, we can arrange it.

The next havdalah and pot luck will be at Leila's home on May 10th. Please call for the address and menu planning.

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Ellis Jacobs, editor of our newsletter since Fall of 1978.

Ellis has made an enormous contribution to our synagogue and community through his dedication and hard work. Todah Rabbah!

Program Calendar for May & June

- May 2 - Open Evening
- May 9 - Candidates Night
- May 16 - Candidates Night
- May 23 - Art Lazere
- May 30 - Open Evening
- June 6 - Assemblyman Willie Brown
- June 13 - Open Evening
- June 20 - Open Evening
- June 27 - Open Evening

Due to a Va'ad Ruling, all programs will be offered after the Oneg. Please return to the Sanctuary as quickly as possible so that programs may begin at a resonable time.

Although I have investigated the possibility of Jewish-Israeli Films, Concerts and other forms of entertainment, I feel that these options should be undertaken by the new administration.

In order to serve each of your interests, I would like to request feed-back concerning your program interests,

My love to you all,

Sandy

donations

Thanks to the following for their donations to Congregation Sha'ar Zahav last month:

Beauregard Lowell
Gerry Rosenstein
Anonymous

birthdays

May 12	Herb Cohn
May 15	Arnie Jacksin
May 16	Stephen Auerbach
May 19	Sally Gordon
May 21	Rob Montague
May 21	Gerald Rosenstein
May 24	Gene Maxey
May 28	Tony Moore
May 29	Eric Kietel
May 30	Isabel Auerbach
May 30	Bryan Taylor

yahrzeits

17 Iyar	Frances Raim, mother of Leila Raim
May 15	Shiri Bana, sister of A.W. Bannowsky
May 20	Gertrude Holtzman, mother of Marcy Holtzman
May 29	Morton Wilkes, brother of Shelley Fernandez

ritual calendar

- May 2 To be announced
- May 9 Laurie Radovsky
"Learning Service" (see inside)
- May 16 Rosh Chodesh
Wendy Weiss
- May 20 (Tuesday) Shavuot services
8:00, Jewish Community Center
- May 23 Allen Bennett
- May 30 To be announced

note

Anyone who does not want their name to appear in print in the newsletter or anything connected with Sha'ar Zahav, please inform us by sending this information to our P.O. Box, attention Membership Committee.

congregation sha'ar zahav

Box 5640
San Francisco, CA 94101
(415) 626-3131

SHA'AR ZAHAV

EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Education Committee of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is offering an exciting program of classes beginning in the month of June. There are no fees for the courses, and there is no limit on the number of classes one may take. Classes are open to both members and non-members. If you are interested in taking one or more of the classes listed below, please check the appropriate boxes and return to:

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
Education Committee
Box 5640
San Francisco, CA 94101

after registration.

BEGINNING BIBLICAL HEBREW

INTERMEDIATE BIBLICAL HEBREW

BEGINNING MODERN HEBREW

JEWISH AND ISRAELI FOLK SONGS

JUDAISM AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

SURVEY OF JEWISH HISTORY

SURVEY OF 20th CENTURY JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS & PHILOSOPHIES

READING THE PROSE AND POETRY OF THE BIBLE

JEWISH MEDICAL ETHICS

ISRAELI FOLK DANCING

MODERN HEBREW POETRY

NAME

PHONE

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

DAYS PREFERRED

TIME PREFERRED

